

The Semaphore

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Fall 2013



WHERE HAVE ALL THE
TALL TREES GONE?

CHINATOWN: A DRAMATIC JOURNEY

PART ONE OF A THREE-PART SERIES

by Howard Wong, AIA

Strategic to San Francisco's charm is Chinatown—as an urban node, pedestrian connector, historical marker, and, yes, as an ethnic and culinary incubator. But Chinatown wouldn't even exist today if not for fortuitous and hard-fought battles.

A Glimpse into Neolithic China and the Beginnings of Human Settlement

In 2005, 4,000-year-old noodles were unearthed in Laija, northwestern China. Archaeologists surmised that vigorous slurping would have been required to eat them—since the 20-inch-long, 1/8-inch-diameter strands were made from hardy millet, commonly called “iron-wire” noodles. Buried under ten feet of Yellow River sediment in a well-preserved earthenware bowl, the prehistoric noodles resembled the traditional La-Mian noodle, made by repeated pulling and stretching of dough by hand. More than a historical symbol for the Neolithic Period's start of human settlements, agriculture, animal husbandry, and craft-making, the noodles reflected a culinary creativity in making the most of limited resources.

Chinatown: Multiple Layers of History and Symbolism

The more unveiled, the more enthralling is Chinatown's lineage. Its history, mystery, architecture, spaces, detailing, and societal infrastructure embody a unique tale—of creativity, cultural cohesiveness, combativeness, and adaptability. Chinatown, the largest Chinese settlement outside China, has multiple layers of uncelebrated history, which can be resurrected to sustain its economy and survival. Grant Avenue, originally known as the Calle de la Fundación (Street of the Founding) and later called ‘Dupont Street,’ is the oldest street in San Francisco. At 827 Grant Avenue near Clay Street, a small bronze plaque marks the site of San Francisco's first built structure. Portsmouth Square, today's pulsating Chinatown “living room,” was San Francisco's historic civic center—a few blocks north of the then waterfront. Here Captain John B. Montgomery of the USS Portsmouth raised the first American flag in San Francisco. At the park's Clay Street edge, another historic plaque makes the site of the first public school in California. Along Walter U. Lum Place, the tall stone monument topped with a gold-gilded sailing ship is dedicated to Robert Louis Stevenson. And, at Kearny and Clay Streets, yet another commemorates the first cable cars which began operating in 1873.

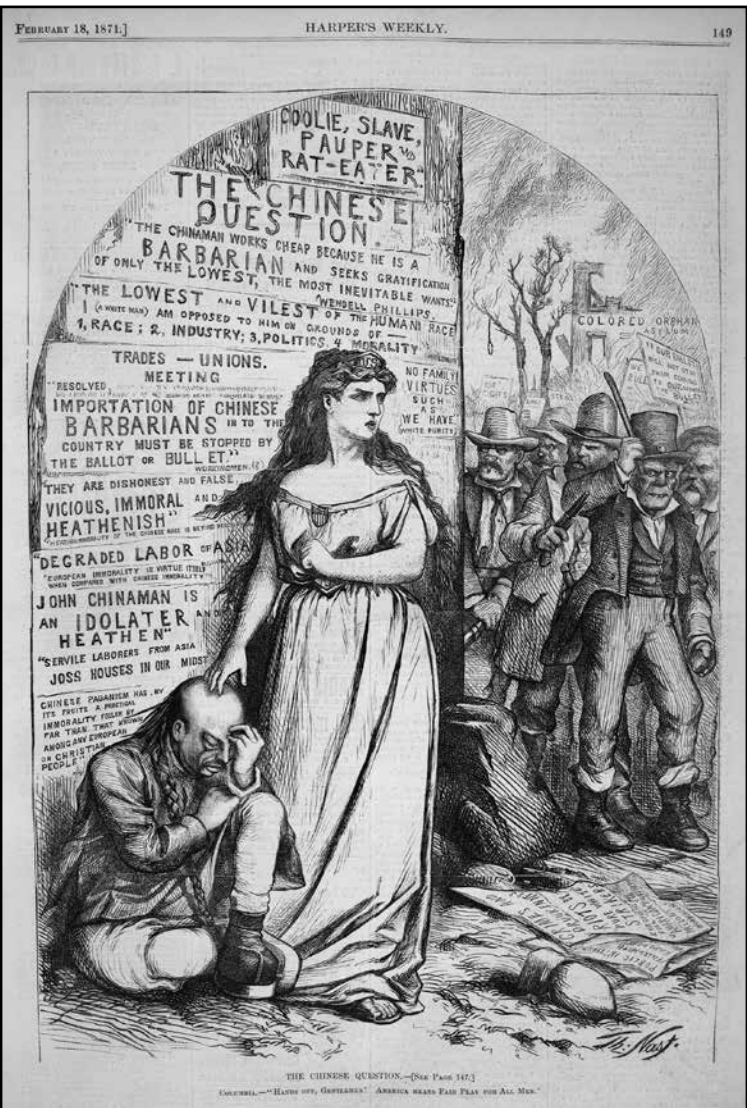
Commercial Street was an active mercantile thoroughfare leading to the “Long Wharf” at Montgomery Street, later extending 2,000 feet into the Bay. A cornucopia of history swirls through Chinatown and needs to be memorialized.

Gold and the Railway: A Transformational Migration

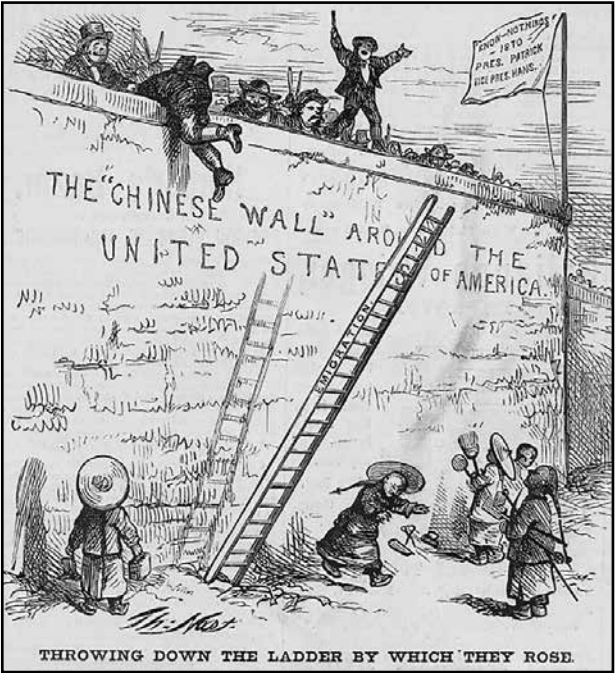
In 1848, with the start of the Gold Rush and the beginnings of an urban San Francisco, the first 780



Workers sorting goods at old Chinatown store.
PHOTO: COURTESY SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY CENTER, SF PUBLIC LIBRARY



FROM HARPER'S WEEKLY, FEBRUARY 1871



Chinese immigrants began a transformational odyssey. Soon thousands of Chinese, mostly Cantonese from southern China, were drawn to the US mainland. *The Oriental*, San Francisco's first Chinese-language newspaper, published a directory in 1856 listing 81 Chinatown businesses.

However, 80% of the Chinese in California in the 1850s and '60s were located in the mining sites. Prior to 1860, only eight percent of the Chinese population in California resided in San Francisco; most of the others departed immediately for the gold mines upon arrival in California. The transcontinental railway brought thousands more Chinese “contract workers” to western states. The Chinese were highly regarded laborers and deemed as exotic and interesting curiosities. Chinese settlements, called ‘Chinatown,’ ‘Little China,’ or ‘Little Canton,’ became newsworthy features.

The 1870s—Tumultuous Times for Chinese in America

A major economic downturn and the Panic of 1877 threw millions of Americans out of work. With the completion of the transcontinental railway, thousands more became jobless. Chinese laborers in mining, farming, logging, and manufacturing were easy economic scapegoats—forced out of cities like Seattle and Tacoma. Facing increasing violence and threats, Chinese miners drifted toward cities in search of less dangerous, available employment. Throughout

the 1870s and 1880s, organized violence against Chinese intensified, along with political restrictions. The regional and occupational routing of Chinese workers forced many to return to China. Others migrated eastward, and many retreated to urban Chinatowns. By 1880, 30% of the Chinese in California lived in San Francisco.

Exclusion and Cultural Incubator: Enclave and Safe Haven

On May 6, 1882, Congress passed the first Chinese Exclusion Act, prohibiting Chinese laborers from entering the country. For the first and only time in US history, legislation was enacted to exclude a specific nationality from immigration. The Act was renewed repeatedly with ever larger majorities and extended indefinitely in 1904. From a peak of more than 125,000 Chinese in America, the number dwindled to 61,000 in 1920. From 1881 through 1900, the Chinese population of San Francisco dropped from 26,000 residents to a mere 11,000.

Nevertheless, within a confined geographical area, Chinatown developed a self-sustaining Chinese-American society, unique to its time and place. In the 1885 “Official Map of Chinatown,” Chinese-owned businesses occupied the area bordered by Broadway, Kearny, Sacramento, and Stockton Streets. Rudyard Kipling, in 1889, described Chinatown as “a ward of the city of Canton.” In the 1890s, photographer Arnold Genthe popularized his “Canton of the West” with black and white photographs of exotic adventurism, bustling streets, and poetic beauty. San Francisco's Chinatown became the safe haven, as written in *The Wasp*, 27 February 1886:

San Francisco sits supinely under the domination of the Chinese Six Companies, and concerts measures to counteract the evils of the Chinese competition already here, when suddenly she finds herself the dumping ground of the entire country. They [The Chinese] come on foot, by steamer, in railway cars, on wagons and almost seem to descend from balloons and to come up out of the sea. There is no end to their multiplication in our midst.

While originally a refueling station for Chinese scattered throughout the region, Chinatown increasingly became a segregated enclave—where flourished a fertile societal, cultural, and economic incubator. In 1877, economic unrest led to sandlot rallies, cries of “The Chinese Must Go!” and mobs descending on Chinatown for mayhem and murder. With rising land values and the burgeoning financial district, Chinatown's property became highly coveted. Prior to 1906, plans were hatched to move Chinatown to a bayside exotic “village”. Local newspapers editorialized in favor of moving the Chinese.

(Stay tuned for Part Two in next Semaphore: How the Earthquake Affected Chinatown.)



Waverly Place, looking toward Coit Tower.
PHOTO: © HOWARD WONG, AIA



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Report and photos by Judy Irving
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In the Spring issue, I noted that Carol Verburg, “our pro-active, creative, and astute *Semaphore* Editor for the past two and a half years, is writing a book and wants to step down.” We put out the call for an editor, and Cap Caplan, a new board member you’ve read about in the Summer issue, volunteered. Carol helped train and orient Cap, whose first issue is this one. Thank you again, Carol, and let us know when your book comes out! Joe Luttrell, past president of THD, has served as our Treasurer for the past three-plus years and trained new board member Nick Ferris to take his place. Thank you, Joe, for insisting on a balanced, transparent budget. We’ve been able to squeak by in the black because of you. We now have two director slots open on our hardworking volunteer board; if you would like to join us and don’t mind working hard yourself, please be in touch. We do committee and neighborhood outreach work in addition to once-a-month board meetings.

Where Have All the Tall Trees Gone?

At Columbus and Filbert, as I’m sure you’ve seen, we recently lost an entire grove of beautiful, healthy, mature, historic 70-foot-tall trees in Washington Square Park: ten Canary Island pines and an enormous olive tree—due to the negligent incompetence of the contractor and tragic lack of oversight by the City’s Departments of Public Works (DPW) and Recreation and Parks (Rec/Park). How could this happen? The contractor dug a trench too close to three trees’ roots, severing them and destabilizing the trees. Where was the arborist who should have overseen the playground construction project? Not on site, indeed, not even on the team until this turn of events. Why did all the pines have to come out when only three were damaged? These trees were “significant”—that is, they were of a certain size and in a public location. And, City regulations require that hearings be held before “significant trees” are cut down. Who authorized the hurried, illegal logging? Did it have something to do with the City’s \$14.5-million settlement with the woman paralyzed by a falling branch several years earlier? Were the roots cut on purpose? Rumors flew, meetings were held, fingers pointed, apologies proffered, replacement trees promised—but no real answers to THD’s questions have been provided as of press time. Who really was at fault? How can DPW (designer/project manager/overseer of the contractor) and Rec/Park (project sponsor) regain the public’s trust? For me personally and for many in North Beach and Telegraph Hill, losing those trees is devastating. The park will never be the same, at least not in my lifetime.

But there’s more tree loss to come! An arborist’s report commissioned several years ago by the Friends of Washington Square recommends that several other large, mature trees be cut down, including an Italian Stone pine near Union and Stockton and the willowy green mayten opposite Mario’s near the Union Street bus stop. They, too, are deemed hazardous. Finally, DPW plans to cut down all the ficus trees lining the park along Columbus Avenue. By the time these are added to what we just lost, can you imagine what the park will look and feel like?

A New Tree Policy for San Francisco

The passage and implementation of Prop E in



Tree removal notice with no opportunity to appeal.

“I SPEAK FOR THE TREES” —DR. SEUSS



The park’s 10-tree pine grove, half gone.

2017 reverted responsibility for street trees back to the City. That’s a good thing, right? Yes and No. DPW took responsibility for maintenance, which had been sorely lacking when individual property owners were supposed to care for street trees. Maintenance means pruning, but it also means removal, and now the City is moving much more quickly to remove street trees, especially the ficus. What Prop E did *not* fund was PLANTING or WATERING!

I spent five years following our parrot flock around this city. They’re called “canopy dwellers” because they like to perch high up in the canopy so they can watch out for hawks and other dangers. But San Francisco’s tree canopy is the *smallest* of any major city in the United States: 6.7% in the Bayview, 11.7% in North Beach, 4.1% in SOMA. Even factoring in heavily forested public land like Golden Gate Park (47.7%) and the Presidio (32.8%), our city canopy averages only 13.7% overall.

According to the City’s own 2014 Urban Forest Plan, every year our so-called green city’s urban canopy shrinks due to lack of funding, a fragmented maintenance structure, and the absence of a cohesive vision. Who plants trees, if not the City? Well, about half the street trees you see were planted by the nonprofit Friends of the Urban Forest: more than 60,000 trees over the past 37 years. In contrast, Rec/Park has NO reforestation policy, and although it aims to re-plant trees at a 2 to 1 ratio on its properties, its actual success rate is far less. Additionally, replacing tall, thick-trunked, heavily canopied trees with tiny saplings calls for a planting ratio more like 4 to 1. Even with Friends of the Urban Forest’s continuing efforts and at our current rate of loss, in 25 years San Francisco will be a city of concrete and impermeable surfaces—**without trees**.

Granted, we’re living with some bad decisions made in the past about which species should be planted on public land: Ficus, with no single “leader” (main trunk) and a tendency to develop heavy branches, wouldn’t seem to be the smartest choice for a street tree, yet they were planted all over the city for decades. Our Italian Stone pines in Washington Square Park also have the no-single-leader problem, because the wrong cultivar was chosen long ago. Many of the trees in Golden Gate Park and in the Presidio were planted in the late 1800s and are nearing or at the end of their lives. The end result of all this — the perfect storm — is that tens of thousands more mature trees will be cut down in San Francisco in the next five to 10 years.

The 2014 Urban Forest Plan is a great document, according to Josh Klipp, a tree activist and attorney. It lays out what we could do to change this downward spiral for street, park, and private trees, with a goal of 2,500 trees planted a year. But as with many great planning documents, it remains unfunded. Everybody’s destroying trees for their own reasons: DPW (hazardous street trees), Rec/Park (emergency removals), Caltrans (make way for cars), SFMTA (make way for

high-speed bus lanes), private developers (make way for buildings), PUC (make way for sewage treatment upgrade), GGNRA (make way for native trees). But, because no cohesive policy exists city-wide, no one is consistently coordinating, communicating, or asking, “How can we save this tree? Is there any way we can do this work without killing this tree?” This should be San Francisco policy. If it were — if trees got that kind of respect, rather than indifference or hostility — we might still have our Canary Island pines.

Josh told me about an older woman, living on the curvy part of Lombard Street, who loves a redwood tree that she planted on her property in memory of her family members. She’s afraid that after her death a developer would want to take the tree out, so she granted a conservation easement over the tree to Friends of the Urban Forest.

Trees provide oxygen; one mature tree provides oxygen for two adults. Trees divert storm water, sequester carbon, provide shade (saving energy), and offer the cheapest way to address the problem of climate change. Investing one dollar in a tree saves five dollars in other costs. (See opentreemap.org.) What are we waiting for? Let’s come up with a good strong tree policy for our beloved city before we lose them all. ✂



(Above) Park statue with trees (pines left, olive right).
(Below) Same perspective, with trees gone.



NORTH BEACH FARMERS MARKET



The North Beach Farmers Market at Filbert and Columbus, open every Saturday 9 to 1. PHOTO: © NICK FERRIS
by Nick Ferris

There was once a time when those living in North Beach in search of gourmet breads, fresh strawberries, and smoked fish had to trek their way to the Ferry Building, Safeway, or a far distant land. Fortunately, those days are behind us!

The North Beach Farmers Market, started in collaboration between the North Beach Neighbors and Piazza Pellegrini, has been a beautiful contribution to the neighborhood. Initially conceived to bring back basic necessities that were once plentiful in the neighborhood, the Market has evolved also as a meeting point for locals on Saturday mornings, becoming very much a part of their weekend routines.

Depending on the week, The Market has 10-12 vendors selling everything from organic veggies and fruit to San Francisco-made hummus, fresh breads, smoked salmon, and the most delicious strawberries you've ever tasted.

Located at Piazza Pellegrini's parking lot on Filbert and Columbus, the Market

is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. through November. Seven to eight hundred people visit the Market each Saturday with many farmers traveling two hours each way to get to our special neighborhood.

If we want to enjoy the Market next year, we must support it, so please come by, check out the stalls, and tell your friends!



Fly Girl Farm bouquets at the North Beach Farmers Market. PHOTO: © ROMALYN SCHMALTZ

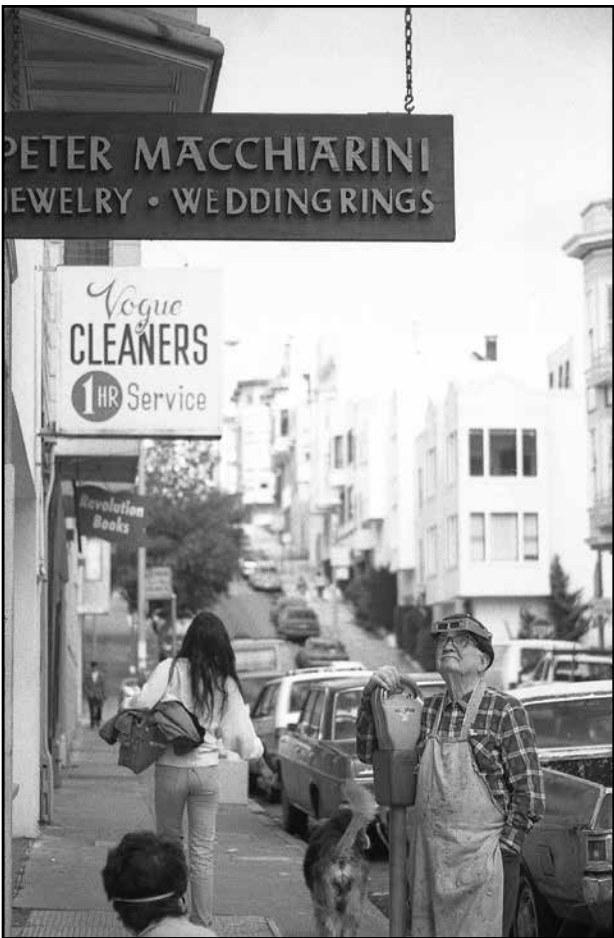


PHOTO: © NICK WAND 1989

SEVEN DECADES AND THREE GENERATIONS

Peter Macchiarini reflects on his tenure in North Beach. In October Peter's son Danny and granddaughter Emma celebrated "Seven Decades and Three Generations of Art, Metalwork, and History" at their iconic North Beach gallery and studio, Macchiarini Creative Design on Grant Avenue.

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DISTRICT 3 SUPERVISOR REPORT

by Supervisor Aaron Peskin
aaron.peskin@sfgov.org

Another Fall, another San Francisco election cycle. If you're an absentee voter, you should have received your ballot in the mail already. Here is a round-up of some state and local measures that are of particular importance to me with my personal recommendations.

State Propositions

Prop 1: \$4B Affordable Housing Bond for Veterans – YES

Prop 2: Close State Loophole to Allow Mental Health Housing for Homeless – YES

Prop 3: \$9B Bond for Critical Water Projects – YES

Prop 5: Expand Prop 13 for Property Owners – NO

Prop 6: Repeal Gas Tax and Require 2/3 Votes for Future Gas Tax – NO

Prop 10: Repeal Costa Hawkins to Expand Rent Control – YES

Local Propositions

Prop A – \$425M Stronger Safer Seawall Bond – YES

As your representative on the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and a longtime waterfront district Supervisor, I have been engaged with the Port and the multi-agency Seawall Resiliency Committee about a long-term rehabilitation and seismic strengthening of our 100-year-old, three-mile seawall, which underpins and protects an estimated \$100 billion in property, public infrastructure, and utilities. We know it's not a question of *if* we have another big seismic event; it's a question of *when*. The Seawall Bond is one critical way we can take steps now to confront the inevitable head-on. I've been working with the Port to ensure that these funds have effective oversight and that safety measures include preservation of historic assets and construction mitigation. Ultimately, this is an issue that I know is near and dear to Telegraph Hill Dweller hearts – so please consider telling friends and neighbors in the rest of San Francisco about this critical measure!

Prop B – Privacy First Policy for San Francisco – YES

The ballot statement in the Voter Information Pamphlet does a good job summing up the essentials of this Charter Amendment, which would adopt a policy to protect the personal private information of our residents. In an era of Facebook data breaches and soaring profitability of the most minute details of your personal life, it's time to create a framework for reasonably regulating corporate control of your personal and private information. San Francisco has a history of leading the nation on groundbreaking policies that anticipate the impacts of evolving industries. Join me in voting to put San Franciscans' privacy first!

Prop C – Our City, Our Home Gross Receipts Tax to Fund Solutions to Homelessness – YES

This measure was put on the ballot by a citizen petition and, frankly, was not an immediate yes for me. But in the end, I believe that housing and mental health services are absolutely critical to solving our homeless crisis. The reality is that we are drowning in a crisis that requires significant, long-term investment. I have advocated for more supportive housing, medical respite beds, and eviction protections to keep people in their homes — but at the end of the day, all of these things require public subsidies. State and Federal funds continue to dry up, while massive tax breaks for corporations have further deteriorated our public coffers. Every day I meet with constituents living on the brink of displacement. My office can often spend an entire workday on the phone with various agencies, trying to find permanent housing or health services for a resident. For the past

YOUR FALL BALLOT BREAKDOWN

three years, I have scoured District 3 for a public site to place a temporary homeless resources center with centralized services that would mitigate the out-of-control situation on our city streets. It can be extremely frustrating, though we are not giving up. If our values dictate that housing and healthcare are public priorities and prevailing analysis continues to affirm that we must invest in these priorities to begin to address the crisis raging on our streets, then I'm willing to swallow the tough pill of another tax (albeit a corporate tax on the top wealthiest companies) in order to secure the \$300 million to tackle this crisis head-on.

Prop D – Commercial Cannabis Tax – YES

Supervisor Malia Cohen sponsored this measure to recapture a modicum of revenue from the booming cannabis industry. It would tax retail cannabis shops at 2.5% on the first \$1 million in revenue and 5% on revenues above \$1 million. Non-retail cannabis businesses would be taxed 1% on revenues up to \$1 million and 1.5% on gross receipts above \$1 million. After I pulled my Private Transportation Tax off of this November's ballot, I asked Supervisor Cohen to include one of the critical revenue-generating provisions from my tax into her measure: a simple fix based on the *Wayfair v. South Dakota* ruling, that would allow San Francisco to tax non-physically-quartered businesses making more than \$500,000 of profit a year in San Francisco. This provision would directly recapture some of the profit that out-of-city/state online companies earn from the SF market while competing with our struggling small brick and mortar businesses.

Prop E – Arts for Everyone Allocation – YES

This was another wonderful opportunity to work with my colleague Supervisor Katy Tang. Both of us have consistently taken strong positions against so-called budget "set-asides" as a matter of responsible fiscal policy. The failed 2016 Prop S arts and homeless set-aside tax measure was problematic because it tied the City's hands as to how to administer General Fund dollars to competing needs. Supervisor Tang, Controller Ben Rosenfield, and I reconvened the arts stakeholders and worked to craft a measure that would enable a true restoration of pre-existing arts funding within the City's hotel tax. Prop E allocates about \$32 million of the existing hotel tax to arts and cultural organizations, individual artist grants, cultural equity and preservation projects, and SFUSD arts education programs. It is an example of what we can accomplish when we work together in a fiscally responsible manner. The measure is supported by a broad coalition of City leaders and arts stakeholders.

Candidates

Given the fact that even in 2018, many of my female colleagues are still not recognized equally for their work in public service and, in many cases, face daunting double-standards and even outright discrimination when seeking elected office, I thought I would take a moment to highlight briefly some exceptional women whom I am supporting this election cycle and whose work I greatly respect.

District 2 Supervisor – Our neighboring supervisorial district is electing a representative, and I am supporting **Catherine Stefani**. A San Francisco native, former prosecutor, and mother of two, Catherine is whip-smart and a hard worker. She deftly served as a legislative aide to my friend, former Supervisor Michaela Alioto-Pier and then to former Supervisor Mark Farrell. She is a problem-solver with values and grit, and I would be happy to continue serving with her. Please consider hosting a house party or telling a friend about Catherine!

Board of Education – Russian Hill parent organizer **Alison Collins** and City College faculty member **Li Mao Lovett** top my list of School Board recommendations. Alison is a mother who has also taught in our public schools, and she's built a broad coalition to push for parents and their children to have an equal say

in SFUSD policies. Her positivity and determination are infectious, and she will be a strong advocate for our families. There is currently no Chinese representation on the School Board (and with Emily Murase's departure, there will be no API representation—period) even though Asians make up 35% of the school population. I attended a fundraiser for Li Mao hosted by Supervisor Norman Yee and was immediately impressed by her policy chops and passion. She will push to recruit and keep teachers in San Francisco and for equity in and out of our classrooms. (*I am also endorsing **Faauga Moliga** for the third open seat.)

BART Board (District 8) – The success and reliability of our regional connections are very important to me as the Chair of the SF County Transportation Authority. I have dual-endorsed in this race but wanted to highlight specifically a woman who has spent considerable time working in District 3, both as a co-chair of the Waterfront Working Group and a transportation organizer in Chinatown. **Janice Li** currently sits on BART's Bond Oversight Committee and has been a critical part of the Transportation Task Force 2045's push to pass an Uber/Lyft tax to generate revenue for public transportation. She would be the first woman to hold this seat and the first Asian-American woman on the BART Board. (*I have also endorsed **Jonathan Lyens** in this race.)

Finally, please look for upcoming meetings to continue our ongoing discussions with City Departments' heads and SFPD on quality of life issues throughout the District. While my report in this *Semaphore* is dedicated to election information, my office continues to work on the issues of homelessness, crime, and cleanliness that we've heard about from neighbors. The Mayor is aware of the need for more resources to District 3, and we are continuing our advocacy.

See you around the neighborhood,
Aaron.




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TRANSPORTATION REPORT

CENTRAL SUBWAY EXTENSION

By Howard Wong, AIA, Committee Co-Chair
howard.wong@thd.org

The proposed Central Subway extension (through North Beach to Fisherman's Wharf) was discussed at a kickoff community meeting at Joe DiMaggio Playground on September 27. Supervisor Aaron Peskin, along with top transportation planners and staff from the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), encouraged an unfiltered dialogue to explore routes, stations, underground/surface designs, streets, parks, construction impacts, business closures, future escalating land values, potential rezoning/ development/ gentrification, mitigation measures, and more. Supervisor Peskin is establishing an open public process, unlike past invitation-only subway meetings. SFMTA staff took extensive notes that will be charted for upcoming neighborhood meetings.

No funding for the subway extension currently exists. If funding is found, the project would take about 12 to 15 years to complete, including approvals, environmental review, design, and construction. Planning for the ongoing Chinatown subway project started in 2005; construction will likely be completed in 2020.

The Central Subway Extension's Initial Study includes conceptual plans of a Washington Square station, showing parts of Columbus Avenue and Union Street to be excavated. As in Chinatown currently, streets could also be used for construction staging—some possibly obstructed or closed, requiring rerouting of Muni buses and traffic.

Parenthetically, rather than waiting 12 to 15 years for a subway extension, one should study Muni improvements this year. For example, restore the 15-Kearny bus to Montgomery Station, 41-Union bus (all day) to Embarcadero Station, and evening/weekend hours and other previously cut routes throughout the city. As part of the community dialogue, one should consider free bus loops, bus rapid transit, driverless micro-buses, and high-tech/automated/four-car buses guided by sensors on Columbus Avenue. For a fraction of the cost of a subway, the existing E- and F-Lines could be extended to Aquatic Park and the Marina. The distance from Market Street to Fisherman's Wharf is only 1-1/2 miles—perfect for pedestrians, bicycles, and futuristic surface transit. Neighborhoods are more vibrant with people walking and riding in front of restaurants, cafés, and stores.



For nearly a decade, it's been a mess at the Central Subway's Chinatown Station construction site at Stockton and Washington.

PHOTO: © HOWARD WONG, AIA



"Businesses Open," says a sign, but Central Subway construction equipment stored on Stockton Street blocks shops' entrances and snarls traffic.

PHOTO: © JUDY IRVING

SUE CAUTHEN (1933-2018)

Long-time Telegraph Hill resident Sue Cauthen passed away on May 4—one day short of her 85th birthday. She will be remembered as a friend, neighborhood activist and leader, journalist, and long-time member of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, San Francisco Tomorrow Board, Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods, Library Citizens Advisory Committee, and Sunshine Task Force.

Born Suzanne Daneman May 5, 1933, in Los Angeles, her early passions were reading, writing, and travel. She developed her writing talents in her school newspaper at Star of the Sea Academy in San Francisco and at UC Berkeley from which she graduated in 1955. As writer and editor of various maritime journals, she had a vast knowledge of San Francisco as a major maritime city and of the environmental and economic issues affecting the regional shipping industry. She was Managing Editor of *Pacific Shipper*, editor and writer



for *Daily Commercial News*, and writer for *Made in Europe*, *Brandon Shipper & Forwarder*, *Pacific Stock Exchange*, and *McGraw Hill World News*. She enjoyed traveling on freighters to work on stories, including a trip to Prince William Sound to cover the Exxon Valdez clean-up.

She and former husband Jerry Cauthen, past president of Telegraph Hill Dwellers, were staunch protectors of neighborhood character. Their writing talents gave weight to articles that appeared in newsletters and newspapers. Her spirit and gumption will be missed.

Donations may be made in her memory to Meals on Wheels San Francisco.

Condolences can be sent to sorbonnesue@gmail.com

Sue Cauthen, neighborhood activist.

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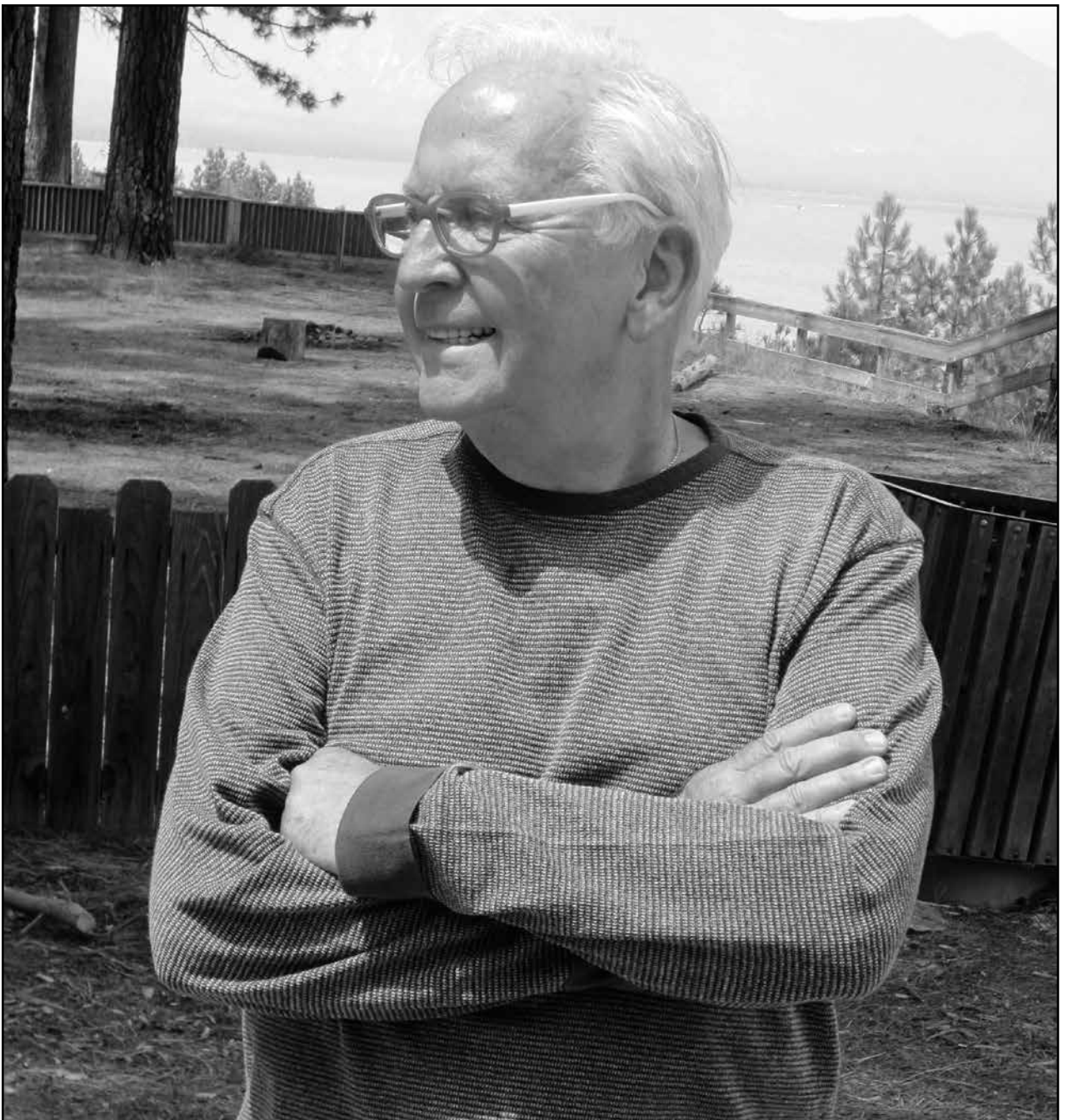
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ARTHUR (ART) PETERSON (1933-2018)

Teacher and author Art Peterson, THD's *Semaphore* editor for eight years, passed away in early September at age 85. Born in Berkeley at a time when, as he recalled with typical whimsy, the City's only gourmet restaurant featured mint jelly, he graduated from Berkeley High School and San Jose State College. After a tour of duty with the US Marines, Art discovered that his passion was educating teenagers, who took readily to his humorous and empathetic teaching style. First in Santa Cruz and then at Herbert Hoover and Everett Junior High Schools in San Francisco, he honed the skills and developed the pedagogical innovations that he then implemented as a teacher of English and film at Lowell High School, where he remained until his retirement. Generations of Lowell students profited from his instruction in principles of sound and lively writing.

The first of Art's five books, *Teachers: A Survival Guide for the Grownup in the Classroom*, appeared in 1985. By then he was already associated with the University of California's Bay Area Writing Project, which would eventually become the National Writing Project. After retiring from Lowell, Art served in Berkeley as the Project's senior editor. In 1996 he published his most practical and influential volume, *The Writer's Workout Book: 113 Stretches Toward Better Prose*. Finally, in 2013, Art expressed his abiding love of his favorite city in the droll and historically informed *Why is that Bridge Orange, San Francisco for the Curious*, still a bestseller at the Golden Gate Bridge Visitor Center.

Art was predeceased by his first wife and survived by two children, his sister, and several grandchildren. He leaves his wife Carol Peterson, an artist and jazz singer, with whom he traveled the world. A Celebration of his life was held in late September at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House. THD honors his legacy here, where you can see all 31 issues of *The Semaphore* that Art edited from 2004 to 2011: <https://www.thd.org/artp>.



Art Peterson, *Semaphore* editor, teacher, and writer.

PHOTO: © CAROL PETERSON



PLANNING & ZONING REPORT

by Stan Hayes, Committee Co-Chair
stan.hayes@thd.org

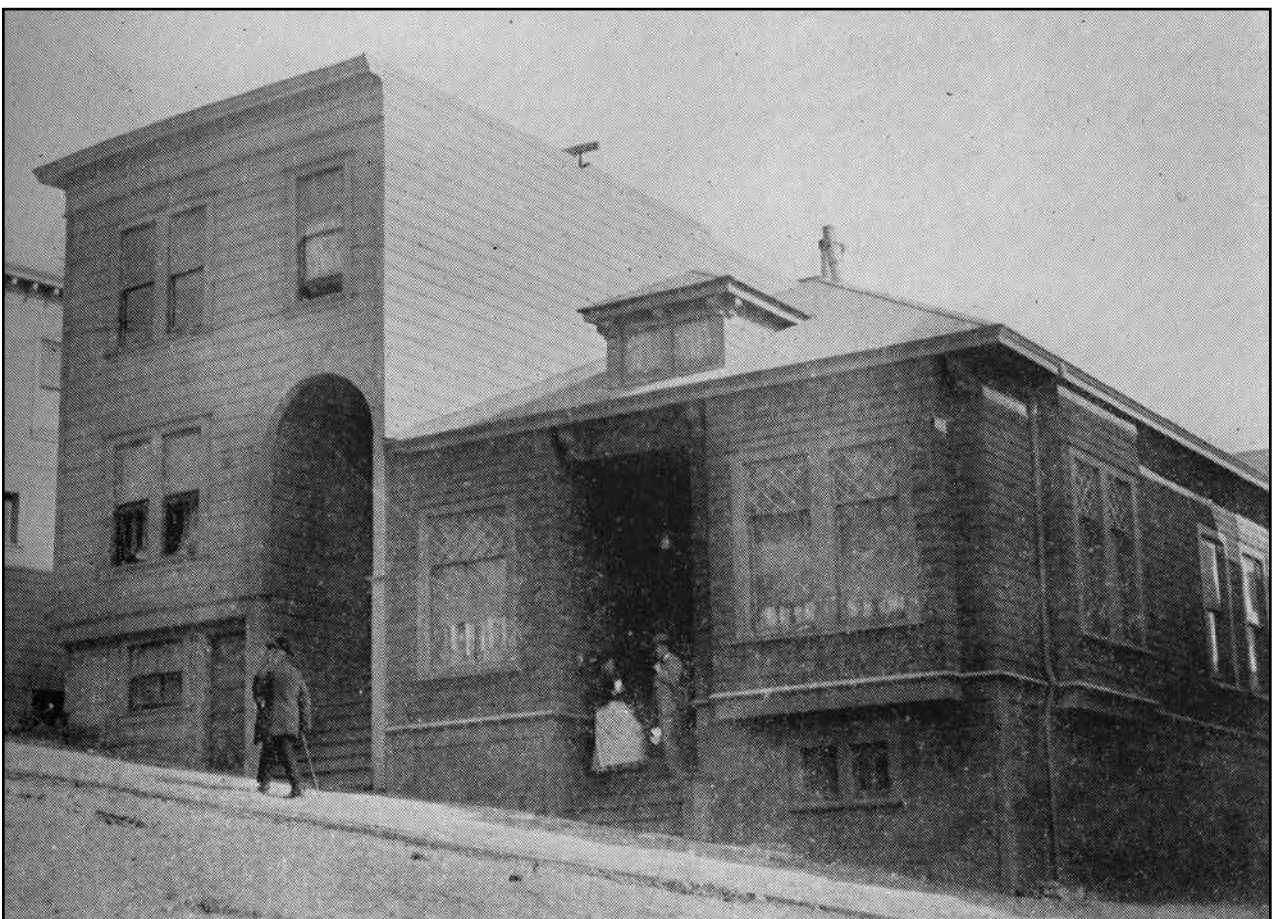
The first rains have come. It's Fall on the Hill. And, as I write this, my wife and I have just returned from Europe. History everywhere, cities and countryside, planned and unplanned. Architecture and urban design, ancient and new, sometimes fruits of thoughtful planning, sometimes unintended consequences of urban evolution. The past balanced with the future, in uncertain tension. Not unlike San Francisco.

We've been busy on planning and zoning issues since last issue. Here are some highlights.

Planning & Zoning Committee

The Committee met in September at the North Beach Library. (Note that *any* THD member is invited to these meetings – get on our mailing list by contacting us at hello@thd.org.) We heard presentations on the following three proposed projects, with final Committee consensus awaiting receipt of additional information:

- **357 Union.** Project Sponsor Jason Jung presented a proposed project at 357 Union, a historically significant 1906 two-story building that is pictured in the *North Beach Context Statement and Survey* as one of the original "Bonus Houses." The project would significantly increase the height of the existing building to construct a four-story, three-unit structure significantly larger in size than the existing building. Though described as a remodel by the sponsor's architect, **the Committee was concerned that the project would effectively demolish this**



357 Union Street (small building on right), image dated 1913.

SOURCE: RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION.



357 Union Street today. Only the siding and windows have been altered.

PHOTO: © JUDY IRVING

historically significant building. If so, this would trigger additional Planning Department review and Planning Commission permitting requirements. The Committee hoped that the project sponsor could meet his goals with a project that is more sensitive to the existing building's historical character.

- **17 Osgood.** Project Sponsors David Shapiro and Jason Fain and their team presented a proposed project at 17 Osgood that would add a two-story vertical addition and a horizontal rear addition to an existing three-story historic building. The proposed additions would approximately double the square footage of the structure. The existing building is listed on the National Register and is a contributor



17 Osgood Alley (smallest building, in center) is one of three Ohio Street Houses listed on the National Register, built pre-earthquake. Ohio Street was Osgood’s former name.

SOURCE: NOEHILL.COM

to the National Register Jackson Square Historic District Extension. **The Committee was concerned about the proposed expansion of the exterior shell of such a historically significant building** (resulting from a doubling of the building’s square footage).



809 Montgomery (Jackson Square Law Offices) with “story poles” showing proposed addition clearly visible from street, despite project sponsors’ claims to the contrary.

PHOTO: © STEWART MORTON

- **809 Montgomery.** Project Sponsor’s contractor, Patrick O’Neil, and his team presented a proposed project at 809 Montgomery that would add a one-story vertical addition and a roof deck to a contributory building in the Jackson Square Historic District. According to the permit application, this project would also include “rehabilitation” of a non-historic storefront door on the Montgomery side, removal of the façade and replacement with a “compatible” new storefront and entry door. As with 17 Osgood, **the Committee was concerned about the proposed large expansion of the exterior shell of a historically significant building, visibility of the proposed additions from the public right-of-way** (confirmed by further inspection of in-place story poles, although sponsors stated that additions would not be visible), **and the effects of additions on adjacent residential neighbors.** The Committee urged the project sponsor to reduce the size of the addition and encouraged further consultation between affected neighbors and the project sponsors to discuss mitigating the project’s impacts.

Updated Storefront Vacancy Survey

In 1986, THD began to survey North Beach busi-

nesses, conducted periodically in the years since then. Updating the 2015 survey (together with the North Beach Business Association (NBBA)), a new survey was completed (jointly with NBBA and North Beach Neighbors). The updated survey discovered that the vacancy rate in 2018 was almost **double** that in 2015, and the survey revealed reasons for the uptick, including business dislocation due to fires, mandatory earthquake retrofits, and the inexplicable refusal by several owners to make their commercial spaces available for lease. THD, NBBA, and North Beach Neighbors are jointly asking the Department of Building Inspection to enforce the existing law to assess penalties upon owners who have left their storefronts in vacant and unsightly condition. For a more detailed discussion of the survey, see the article in the last *Semaphore* issue.

Reappointment of Planning Commissioners

With the support of THD and other neighborhood organizations, we are delighted to report that the Board of Supervisors unanimously reappointed Kathrin Moore and Dennis Richards to the Planning Commission in July.

Replacement of JCDecaux Public Toilets

THD presented comments to the Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) and the Arts Commission in July on the City’s proposed replacement of public toilets at Coit Tower and Washington Park. We opposed efforts to replace the existing structures at those locations with the standardized urban, hard-edged design being proposed citywide. Instead, we urged the HPC and the Arts Commission to require site-specific designs be developed for Coit Tower and Washington Square that would better evoke their history and heritage and more fully reflect and reinforce their unique location context. We are also joining with the Coit Tower Working Group established by Supervisor Peskin in a similar effort for Coit Tower.

Extension of Hours at 412 Broadway (Penthouse Club)

THD joined with the Barbary Coast Neighbors Association, the Golden Gateway Tenants Association, and 455 Vallejo Street Homeowners Association to

oppose an application to extend the hours for the Penthouse Club from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. THD joined these neighborhood groups in supporting Planning Department staff’s recommendation to disapprove the application. A final decision on approval is pending before the Commission. In Sacramento, Senate Bill 905, sponsored by Senator Scott Weiner, would have allowed San Francisco and eight other cities to extend hours from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. for sale of alcohol. The Governor has vetoed that legislation, stating in his veto message that “we have enough mischief from midnight to 2 without adding two more hours of mayhem.”

Again, remember! **YOU CAN BE A PART OF THIS!** If you’d like to join, or at least get information from, the THD Planning & Zoning Committee, just send me an email at hello@thd.org or stan.hayes@thd.org.



Shiny “Spaceship Toilets” proposed for landmark sites Coit Tower and Washington Square Park.

(DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS PHOTOS)


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PETER L. DWARES

Story and photos © 2018 by Nick Wand

In the early 1960s, every block had a grocery store I could pop into for candy when I wandered around North Beach. Hi-Ho Market at Union and Mason was our favorite and closest to where we lived. Kitty-corner was the Lucky Star Market specializing in imported Italian goods like canned raviolis, Star Olive Oil, and exotic fish sauces. Sometimes I stole candy bars from Hi-Ho by walking out with them between my legs. I didn't feel guilty about it since we spent much of our scarce money there.

We often shopped at the more expensive Italian Village, a big market at Green and Columbus originally named 'The Buon Gusto'. It always enraged me that the clerk at Italian Village dumped the change in the bag with the food as though I wasn't trustworthy enough to carry it back home after I was sent to shop for our groceries.

Like the buildings that housed them, these stores were built immediately after the 1906 earthquake and fire, using the same kind of materials and had many features in common. I figured out that the ones that had "New" in their name had been rebuilt on the site of stores destroyed in the disaster. The three-dimensional tea brand letters 'MJB' sometimes remained glued to a few ancient store windows from the 1920s. The floors were brown wood, worn, and shiny where people walked but caked with dirty black wax in out-of-the-way corners.

Produce was usually displayed under a fluorescent tube in front of a mirror to make it look like there was twice as much. Shelves had a concave aluminum strip along the front edge into which white plastic squares with black numbers could be inserted to show the cost of the item. Prices were written on cans with grease pencil or awkwardly on cellophane-wrapped goods like noodles. Later, a clever self-inking rubber stamp with adjustable rolling numbers was used to mark items so the grocer would know what to charge at the cash register.

Shopkeepers wore peach-colored aprons tied with a cord over their clothes. Sometimes I could tell they had a gun underneath. When I saw a grocer cheating, cutting all the food coupons out of a *Reader's Digest* to turn in for credit, I realized what had happened to magazines I never got to finish reading at the Copper Quarter Laundromat where I hung out around the corner on Union Street. Instead of a cash register, some grocers used a Burroughs adding machine and handed the paper tape to the customers as a receipt. I figure it was to avoid taxes since there was no record.

At the back of stores, greasy black motors hummed under white wooden drink coolers. When a can or bottle of soda was lifted off the front of a cleverly canted rack inside, another one rolled down to the stop by gravity.

Lifesavers were displayed in a sheet metal rack with a bottom lip shaped and

painted exactly like the rolls of candy lined up behind it: butterscotch, tutti-frutti, orange, cherry, and those horrible, white, lemon-flavored ones. The shelves above held candy bars that cost a nickel. Every store had a different selection. There were the usual Mars Bars, the Bit-O-Honey's, the Hershey's, Mounds, and Peter Paul. Sometimes they sold Butternut and Hollywood bars as well as Nestle Crunch. Charleston Chews could pull out fillings and ruin kids' braces, but I didn't have those. Odd things like Peppermint Patties or Ice Cubes were too expensive.

Chinese groceries often sold little homemade cellophane packets of Moi, or salted plum bits, that made your mouth pucker and scream for a Pepsi or chocolate popsicle.

After Mama dropped our hour-glass shaped Chemex coffee pot that required special paper filters, or cheaper folded paper towels, my usual trip up the block to Hi-Ho was to buy a tiny jar of Yuban instant coffee, a pack of cigarettes (with a note from her), and sometimes a Mars bar we'd share.

Even though extra-rich milk for coffee or cereal was labeled 'Homo', or homogenized, Mama would always shake the waxed carton to mix the cream like I guess she did as a little girl. After Foremost got rid of the paper tabs that sealed a round pouring hole in the top corner, the company replaced them with a kind of folded tent top that was split open, pushed back, and then pulled forward to make a spout. She would inevitably ignore the "open here" instructions and begin to open the wrong side, which made me furious. Then, she'd partially open the correct side, only making it worse.

I could always afford a one-cent Bazooka bubble gum, splitting it down the middle to get two pieces. It was sold up on the counter next to a big round glass jar of 'Dad's Oatmeal Cookies' that I never ever tasted because they were too expensive, 75 whole

cents. That would have required 25 small soda bottle three-cent deposit refunds, requiring hours of searching garbage cans around North Beach Playground or Washington Square.

Drinks cost 15 cents for a small soda plus a three-cent refundable deposit or 25 cents for a quart bottle with a nickel deposit. My ability to earn money scrounging soda bottles ended after 1967 with a plague of no-deposit, no-return screw top bottles or aluminum cans destined for the stinky bay landfill across from Candlestick Park.

We switched stores a lot because Mama didn't like the men who ran them after they refused to accept our checks. Previous checks would be taped to the back of the cash register revealing Mama's name, our address, and an "Insufficient Funds" stamp. She switched our allegiance for "economic reasons," she claimed, or because she was "trying to help out the little guy."

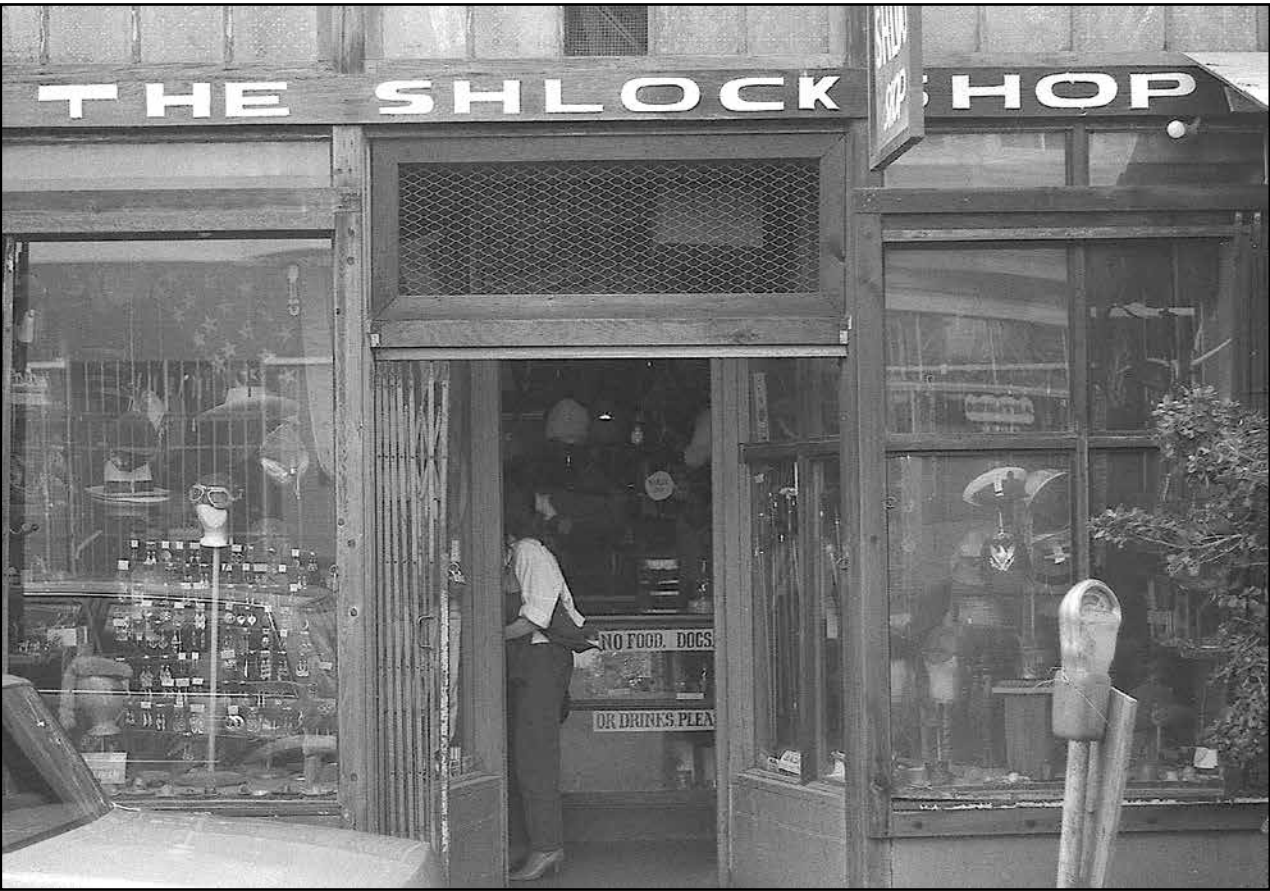
Savelli's was a tiny store up the hill across from Swensen's Ice Cream. I thought the name meant "savings." It had a few racks of canned goods and some fruit for sale but no other produce. Mama said that Mr. Savelli needed our support because he had to compete against the bigger nearby Searchlight Market, which she said "had the highest prices west of the Mississippi."

When I was four, I had joyfully raced a shopping cart into a shelf of jugs of Familia Cribari red wine at Searchlight, covering the black and white tile floor with green glass and red wine. The owner, Mr. Rosenthal, made Mama pay for them. She never liked him after that, although we still shopped there because of the store's large variety of foods such as Swanson's frozen chicken pot pies that I could heat by myself in a camp oven on our gas stove, lit with those wonderful new style kitchen matches. Plus, Searchlight sold other items like Underwood Deviled Ham that I spread on Parisian Sourdough, which I cycled through until I got sick of it.

I felt sad when I read the sign next to a telephone on the counter of Savelli's: "Telephone calls – ten cents." He must have been struggling. We went out of our way to patronize his empty ghost store. Years later I saw him working at Italian Village. He was laughing with some fellow workmen, all having a good time while they uncrated vegetables.



Can't Bust 'Em Work Cloth



The Schlock Shop on Grant Avenue.



Basement living quarters were common in the 60s and 70s.



Another subterranean room.

ER GROCERY



es, Kearny near Jackson.

For about a year, Mama switched our allegiances to Rossi's Market on Vallejo and Columbus because the men who worked there had some interesting qualities, and shopping there had some kind of magic about it. It was also close to our main hangout, Trieste, which changed through the day from a sunny early morning place full of alert people and their plans to save the world into a dim smoky cavern of red lipstick on wine glasses and the beginnings of rendezvous by the time we left at night.

Many stores had liquor bottles lined up in the street window to tempt alcoholics. Typical brands were Old Grand Dad, Black and White with the two dogs on the label, Old Crow, Gilbey's Gin, and Thunderbird wine with screw tops that winos bought. Old men bought flasks of liquor in little bottles with a curved profile to hide in their suit-coat pockets. They sipped from them on the benches in Washington Square while they hung out with their friends.

When one of Mama's interior decorating clients finally paid a bill and we celebrated with lamb chops, the Hi-Ho grocer's old father entered a walk-in meat locker with a window through which could be seen hanging sides of beef and lamb. He brought out a lamb carcass and with two thwacks of a cleaver cut

the chops off on a butcher table. It made me nervous because his hands shook and he wore thick glasses. The old man and I never once had a conversation beyond grunts and 'yes' and 'no' and pointing at things. Nevertheless, I liked him. He drove a big blue and white Chrysler Crusader that had big tail fins by the trunk and a knight on both sides with a lance pointing toward the front of the car.

The owner of Hi-Ho was like a cop on the beat. He'd peer through the liquor bottles at what was going on in the intersection. Once I was hiding at the corner waiting for a kid named 'Marco' to walk up Mason so I could jump out and scare him with a razor-sharp miniature samurai sword letter opener I had found that morning. Before Marco arrived at the corner, I looked over and saw the owner of Hi-Ho walking toward me across Union Street, grim faced, carrying a ripped off piece of a wooden vegetable crate with which I knew he was going to spank me. Even though I ran, I appreciated that guys like him made the neighborhood and The City a better place.

The only store that sold dinosaur cards, as well as Horror Terror Cards, was Apex Market at Filbert and Taylor. Mars Attacks cards were sold at the New Radio on Greenwich and Jones. The Chuck Grocery, at Columbus and Scotland, owned by the father of a third-grade classmate, was the one place that sold Outer Limits cards. Years later The Chuck would become a comic book store.

Time stood still as sun-bleached items with Italian or Chinese signs gathered dust inside storefront windows through the years. Little dolls wearing Italian-Swiss outfits sat around a miniature dining table in the window of Cafferata Ravioli Restaurant at Filbert and Columbus. They slowly faded to grey through the 1960s. In the window of Iacopi's Butcher Shop was a letter written in the 1950s: "I took this money from your counter years ago. I am returning it to you because I don't want to burn in hell." A pile of dark oxidized coins, barely enough to buy a sandwich, sat on the corner of the letter that slowly faded to white in the afternoon sun.

Abandoned stores sometimes had butcher paper



Felice Rossi Carpentry shop, Union and Sonoma.

tacked up or a coat of paint applied directly to the big windows on the sidewalk. A shop on Powell near Green had a cat that would lie sideways and peek with one eye out of a hole it had clawed in the paper. Usually these stores had a solid granite step up from the sidewalk above which was the street address or ancient business name written in front of the door in purple pieces of terrazzo tile on a grey background. As I learned from studying one of our art books about the ruins of Pompeii, this material could last thousands of years and might outlast The City.

I heard scandalized squares repeat whispered stories of families living in these empty stores around Russian and Telegraph Hills. People definitely lived behind the Beatnik and later Hippie stores on Grant Avenue like The Paint Pot, The Cheshire Cat, Tassano's, or The Shlock Shop. A sink and a toilet were sometimes visible past the curtain in the rear of an active business. Lights could be seen all night at the back of the stores. Occasionally people would sleep on the platform above the front door to the sidewalk. It must have been really noisy at night when the bars let out.

Where doors in the sidewalk open up to reveal a stairway or slide to deliver items to basements, there is often a space to live among spider webs and ancient brick. Vincent Giusti, a friend of mine, lived in a basement on Powell Street accessed by back stairs. He slept next to a bunch of wine barrels that smelled like stale red wine. So did he.

Another schoolmate, Poverello, lived with his mom in one room at Columbus and Glover. A heater stovepipe poked through a porthole made in the top of their only window, partially blocking their view of cars parked outside at Bob's Flying A gas station. I felt really sorry for him. His mother spent her day sitting across the street in Dunkin' Donuts drinking coffee, chain-smoking, and filling electric-yellow stamped-aluminum ashtrays with cigarette butts.

After the rent on our cottage was jacked up to over \$300 in the late 1960s, we unsuccessfully looked for an empty shop to move into. How cool it would be to sleep a few feet from the sidewalk and be where the action was right outside our front door in the safe, snug derelict bohemian heart of North Beach.

But, by then, the once empty storefronts along Grant Avenue up to Filbert had been rented out. Expensive hippie clothing was sold at the Middle Earth, Miki, or The Chelsea Bird. Resale shops proliferated, and sewing factories moved in with drifts of lint piled up against closed Venetian blinds. Sometimes a door would be left open on a rare hot day. As I wandered through the dismaying changes of my North Beach adolescence, I could see women sitting under fluorescent lights and hear the whirr of their sewing machines like quiet waves breaking on a beach.

Excerpted from a full-length photo-illustrated memoir of growing up in North Beach.



Wings Grocery at Green and Kearny.



Fats Grocery at Jackson and Kearny.

Author Nick Wand can be reached at NickNorthBeach@protonmail.com. More at www.thd.org/semaphore. Issue #217 "Seeking Shelter in North Beach" and Issue #218 "The Railroad Yard."

SEMAPHORE BULLETIN BOARD

Swissnex Salon Now through Dec 8, 2018 at Pier 17 “Responsibility Towards Creation”

How can we put fundamental values and rights at the core of technology and foster responsible innovation in the public sphere? Is Big Tech playing with basic values in the name of innovation? Are these re-arranged values a symptom of Silicon Valley’s “disruption” — a sign of diminished freedoms at the hand of technology giants? A two-month series of activities envisions a shift from the dominant view of innovation as a means to create economic value, towards a source of societal value. (<http://bit.ly/SalonSNX>)



NORTH BEACH FIRST FRIDAYS

Stroll around Columbus and Grant Avenues on the first Friday evening of each month to see what’s new in the neighborhood. You’ll find an open-house welcome at art galleries, boutiques, and local watering holes, as well as at pop-ups and cultural events.

Canessa Gallery, 708 Montgomery St. at Columbus www.canessa.org
Gallery 1317, 1317 Grant Ave.
Grey City Gallery, 250 Columbus Ave. at Broadway/Pacific/Saroyan Alley greycitygallery.com
Live Worms Gallery, 1345 Grant Ave. www.sflivewormsgallery.com
Macchiarini Creative Design, 1544 Grant Ave. www.macreatedesign.com
Modern Eden Gallery, 801 Greenwich St. www.moderneden.com
Mule Gallery, 80 Fresno St. mulegallery.com
North Beach Bauhaus, 703 Columbus Ave. www.nbbauhaus.com
Telegraph Hill Gallery, 491 Greenwich St. telegraphhillgallery.com
Remind yourself how much fun it is to live in such a vibrant corner of the world by rediscovering the thriving local art scene while you support the creative community behind it.
Events vary from month to month, so check the *North Beach First Fridays* website (<http://northbeachfirstfridays.com/>), Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/northbeachfirstfridays/>), and Twitter feed (<https://twitter.com/NB1stFridays>) for the latest openings, closings, and events.



FREE JOB SEARCH MEETINGS

that can jumpstart your job search or get you out of the career doldrums
The Job Forum
235 Montgomery St., Mezzanine conference room
Every Wednesday evening, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Sponsored by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, The Job Forum provides job search networking and career support to professional job seekers in the San Francisco Bay Area.
thejobforum.org
Free for job seekers — See story in the Winter 2018 Semaphore.



NOONTIME CONCERTS

“San Francisco’s Musical Lunch Break”
FREE classical performances by outstanding local and international artists
Every Tuesday, 12:30-1:15 PM (approximately)
Old St. Mary’s Cathedral, corner of California and Grant
Admission is free; please make a \$5 donation if you can.
<http://noontimeconcerts.org/>

THE 54th BIG BOOK SALE Wednesday-Sunday, October 31-November 4: open to the public

The Friends of the San Francisco Public Library Big Book Sale is the largest used book sale on the West Coast, attracting more than 10,000 people from up and down the state. For five days, shop your way through tables brimming with more than 500,000 books priced at just \$2 to \$4. A portion of unsold books are given free to a designated charity, helping close reading and resource gaps and keeping books out of landfill. Money raised from the sale of every book goes towards Friends and its mission to support the library. See you there!
To become a part of Friends, go to FriendsSFPL.org.



North Beach Citizens' Community Recognition Award Dinner Honoring Ruth Yankoupe 6 p.m. November 11, 2018 at the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club

Buy tickets (\$175) at: www.northbeachcitizens.org/events
North Beach Citizens is pleased to recognize Ruth Yankoupe as its honoree this year. Ruth has worked tirelessly on behalf of homeless and low-income residents in our community. As the former North Beach Citizens' Board President and current advisory board member, she has inspired our community in her dedication to improving the lives of those who don't always have a voice. Join us in celebrating her achievements!
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of helping seniors in northeast SF to age-in-place, engaged, connected, and supported.
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Thank you all for what you do for our neighborhood and for referring your friends and neighbors to us—all are welcome at our social events, and everyone, regardless of age or income, is invited to become a member of this friendly community.
For more information, go to www.nextvillagesf.org, email info@nextvillagesf.org, or call (415) 888-2868.

To all our friends on Telegraph Hill:

Hanna and Rana Chedyak from
Fog Hill Market invite you to visit us at our new business, **Nook Cafe**, at 1500 Hyde Street at the corner of Hyde and Jackson

Hanna Chedyak
Cell.# 650-307-2270

&

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Hanna & Sandy Suleman

10

Issue #223 • Fall 2018



PARKS & TREES REPORT

by Don Raichle, Committee Chair
don.raichle@thd.org

By now, everyone is aware that our neighborhood has been impacted by the terrible loss of the mature Canary Island pine grove in Washington Square. It can't be missed. What was once a landmark stand of 50- to 70-foot-tall trees that could be seen from the bottom of Columbus Avenue to the slopes of Telegraph and Russian Hills is now an empty void on the corner of Columbus and Filbert.

How this was allowed to happen is still not clear, and in the three months since it occurred, no concise explanation has been provided. Looking into it has been like reading an Agatha Christie mystery. Like *Murder on the Orient Express*, it appears that multiple players were tied to the weapon—in this case, trenching equipment. However, instead of the victim being an evil villain, our victims include nine pines and an olive tree. Together they provided a critical visual landmark and sense of maturity and establishment within our neighborhood.

What we do know is that this didn't need to happen. The initial attitude from the Departments of Public Works (DPW) and Recreation and Parks (Rec/Park) was, "yes, this is tragic, but let's move forward, and we'll do better next time." This response is beyond insufficient. We need to understand precisely what took place, so it can't happen again. Getting answers is even more critical since Washington Square is slated to have a much larger infrastructure upgrade designed and managed by the same departments. In the opinion of your author, the proposed irrigation and drainage project is essential to the long-term health of the park. But given the large amount of trenching, soil replacement, and on-site equipment storage, if that project isn't undertaken to the highest professional standards and practices, it could create irreparable harm to our neighborhood's most important open space. It is crucial, therefore, that how this occurred is understood and clear changes to practices defined so future work within Washington Square and all other open space within the City won't suffer the same fate.

So what did happen? As noted in the President's Corner, in the void of clear accountability, lots of rumors have been floating around. What we do know is this: Construction was proceeding for the new children's playground in the park. This is a project sponsored by Rec/Park. This department initiated the project, obtained funding, and then provided oversight of design and construction management, which was done by DPW. DPW developed the design and docu-

mentation for construction and subsequently has been the one overseeing the contractor. This department was responsible for the regular on-site review of the work's progress. During construction, trenching was done to allow for installation of subsurface utilities and retaining wall foundations. During this process, a significant number of roots were cut: some by trenching, some by backhoes, and some by hand, the latter process being the method outlined in the plans. We also know that proper protective fencing outlining the limits of where construction could occur beneath the trees was not properly installed, and several other prescribed practices were not followed. There may also be issues with the actual design and final construction plans that didn't fully take into consideration potential damage to the trees. Apparently, these deficiencies were not noted by DPW, which should have been making sure the work was done correctly. But this isn't clear, and, beyond that, things get murky. Rec/Park requested several times that the tree protection needed to be installed; we do not know how far down the chain of communication these requests traveled. It is also not clear if an arborist was consulted prior to and during this work, standard practice given the trees' critical proximity. All we know is that after the root cutting and two arborist reports later, the trees were determined to be critically damaged and in need of removal. Within a week, they were gone.

What we are left with is a park with its landscape forever altered and an almost-completed playground that was designed to include the now missing trees as a major design component. While it appears there is lots of blame to go around, the contractor and DPW have the most to answer for. Rec/Park also shares some of the responsibility since it was the ultimate representative of the neighborhood's interests and should have been on top of confirming DPW was properly monitoring the work on site. In short, indifference and incompetence seem to be the main culprits.

The initial response from Rec/Park was to decide quickly on what the replacement trees should be and wrap up construction by the end of October. Given that the playground took over a year to design, within a week deciding how to modify and "fix" the design without the mature trees seemed like an unacceptable solution. Due to pushback

by a number of neighborhood groups, including THD, that process has been slowed down and a more thorough review of new plantings initiated.

Moving forward, it is essential that Rec/Park and DPW reform how they design and execute their park "improvements" before they are entrusted to proceed with any new projects. THD presented Rec/Park with a series of questions in order to understand what actually happened. Those questions were submitted over a month ago, and we are still waiting for a response. Included was a request for specific steps and practices that will be followed in the future to ensure this travesty never happens again and that future work in all our parks will be conducted properly. With any luck, by the next *Semaphore* issue, we will have a more complete understanding of what happened and can report on actions to be taken to address the inadequacies witnessed.



Canary Island pine grove before removal, from across Columbus Avenue.

PHOTO: © JUDY IRVING



Same perspective from across Columbus Avenue after pines were cut down.

PHOTO: © JUDY IRVING



COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

by Al Fontes, Committee Chair
al.fontes@thd.org

Although we are one of the oldest neighborhood organizations in San Francisco, THD uses quite a bit of modern information technology to support the work of our organization. Implementing much of that technical infrastructure falls within the mission of the THD Communications Committee, of which I recently became chairman.

Our committee drives much of the outgoing communication from THD, including email, our website, and other types of online presence. We work on outreach to potential new members while keeping existing members abreast of happenings and events related to the neighborhood and THD itself.

We rely on several services that are well known and popular enough within the business community to be considered standards. For our website, we use Wix, a simplified system with which we maintain www.thd.org. Wix is a kind of "do it yourself" tool, designed

for people who don't have an extensive technical background but still want to maintain their own website. It also provides us with the infrastructure used to send bulk email announcements (affectionately known as "blasts") to the general membership.

The THD membership database resides on a service provided by Salesforce, admired more for its technology than taste in high-rise architecture. The Salesforce system allows us to maintain member names and addresses, keep track of membership renewal and expiration dates, and store various other bits of personal information that members provide to us.

As most THD members know by now, we use PayPal to collect payments online. This has greatly streamlined the process of joining and renewing existing memberships, which used to be done entirely with paper forms and mailed checks. PayPal also allows us to accept payment via credit card when we sell tee shirts and other items at public events, such as the North Beach Festival and the general membership meeting.

One recent development we're pretty excited about

is the recent creation of the *North Beach Now* podcasts. THD member Blair Helsing has been interviewing local community members and business owners about recent developments around Telegraph Hill. Among the podcasts are recent interviews with board member Nick Ferris about the new Saturday farmers market and with Jeff Roden, who recently opened Igneous Theory, a store in the space formerly occupied by Yone. The podcasts are hosted on Soundcloud and are accessible through our website <http://www.thd.org/podcast>.

I will be discussing other activities of our committee in subsequent issues of *The Semaphore*, including, for example, membership promotion and online archiving of this publication. We welcome members who have an interest in member outreach and communications in general to volunteer. For more information, you can email me at al.fontes@thd.org. Ownership of a pocket protector is not required.





ART & CULTURE REPORT

Anna Berryman, Committee Chair
anna.berryman@thd.org
All photos © Bob Berryman

Almost 50 Telegraph Hill Dwellers came out on Tuesday evening, August 14, to hear nine of our very own North Beach and Telegraph Hill authors read portions of their latest works. We met at Chief Sullivan's, a charming literary-themed tavern on Green Street. There was a little something for everyone: fiction, nonfiction, mystery, historical biography, memoir, even a work in progress. After the readings, members could peruse and purchase the authors' books, get books signed, and ask questions. This event is sure to be back by popular demand!

A Wonderful Night At The Symphony

Thirty Telegraph Hill Dwellers convened at Davies Hall on Thursday evening, September 6, for the All San Francisco Concert, a special event for non-profit groups around the city. Conducted by maestro Michael Tilson Thomas and featuring cellist Oliver Herbert, the symphony performed works by Liszt, Tchaikovsky and Gershwin. It was fantastic! This concert is an incredible bargain at \$12 per ticket. So, if you've never been to the symphony, here's your chance to give it a try at minimal cost. Be sure to check it out next year!



Just a few members of THD's group enjoying the Symphony, with an amazing view of the orchestra at that. The "All San Francisco Concert" was held on September 6th.

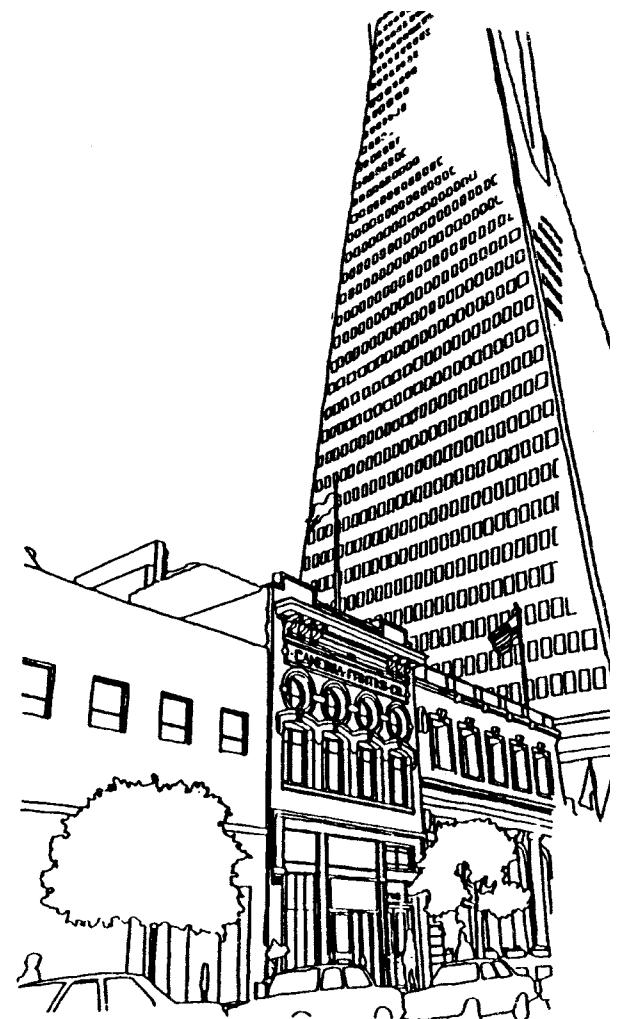
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The authors (left to right) at Chief Sullivan's, with Irish authors in the back-ground painting: Back row – Judith Robinson, Terry Tarnoff, Richard Slota; Middle row – Anthony F. Gantner, B. Alexandra Szerlip, CJ Verburg; Seated – Mark Bittner, Jon Golinger, Anthony Long



Anthony Long reads from his novel-in-progress, tentatively entitled –30–.

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BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS, JUNE-AUGUST 2018

by Mary Lipian, Recording Secretary
mary.lipian@thd.org

JUNE 2018

Communications Committee Established

The Board of Directors established a “Communications Committee” as a special committee, appointing Al Fontes as Chair. The committee will focus on improving and updating THD’s website and membership emails and will explore other electronic communications to keep the membership informed and connected.

Storefront Vacancy Survey Underway

THD has been working with the North Beach Merchants Association to survey current storefront vacancies in the North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District, examining the reasons for the vacancies, including recent fires, required seismic retrofits, illegal uses, and landlords who have voluntarily kept their properties vacant for a number of years.

Opposition to Conditional Use Authorization for Extension of Hours for Penthouse

The owners of the Penthouse Club at 412 Broadway are seeking approval by the Planning Commission to extend hours of operation from 2:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. The Barbary Coast Neighborhood Association, 455 Vallejo Street Home Owners Association, Golden Gateway Tenants Association, and Telegraph Hill Dwellers have sent letters to the Commission jointly

opposing the proposed hours of operation of this strip club, as it would negatively impact nearby residents and set a bad precedent for the other clubs on Broadway.

Seawall Program Community Meeting

THD members were encouraged to attend a Seawall Program Community Meeting hosted by the San Francisco Port on June 21. The meeting focused on an upcoming bond initiative to fund studies on how to retrofit and strengthen the Embarcadero Seawall to address seismic safety, sea level rise, and waterfront land use.

JULY 2018

Washington Square Project – Presentation by Department of Recreation and Parks

Levi Conover, project manager from the Recreation and Parks Department (Rec/Park), presented an update on the status of the Washington Square playground project currently underway. He reviewed with the Board the Department’s proposed Washington Square Water Conservation Project to upgrade the irrigation and sub-drain infrastructure of the entire park, adding that the project was developed in partnership with the SF Public Utilities Commission to conserve water use in parks. Although upgrading the pathways in Washington Square was not originally part of project scope, Friends of Washington Square requested that it be added. Mr. Conover reported that he expects the design documents to be completed in August and the project out to bid in September. He anticipated the contract awarded by November or December and

construction to begin in February 2019. Levi explained that Rec/Park wants to complete all of Washington Square in one phase, including the removal of major trees in the park. In addition, all ficus street trees will be removed along the Columbus Avenue side of Washington Square by DPW. More information is on the Rec/Park website at: <http://sfrecpark.org/project/washington-square-water-conservation-project/>

Proposed Cannabis Dispensary in North Beach

The owners and operators of Barbary Coast North Beach presented their proposal to locate a cannabis dispensary at 1335 Grant located next to Tupelo, between Vallejo and Green, and across from Nature Stop. It was explained that under the City’s new regulations, only one cannabis dispensary will be approved to serve the North Beach area and that it will require approval of a Conditional Use Authorization by the Planning Commission. Barbary Coast North Beach is developing a community outreach plan.

New THD Semaphore Editor

THD welcomes Cap Caplan as the new Editor of *The Semaphore*. Volunteers are invited to join the Semaphore Committee. As current Editor, Cap is looking for people who will generate ideas for stories and perhaps write articles. A Photo Editor is needed to ensure good quality photos.

AUGUST 2018

No Meeting






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TREASURER'S REPORT

by Nick Ferris
nick.ferris@thd.org

As the new Treasurer for THD, I want to thank our members for their dues, donations, and involvement. It's because of your dedicated membership that we are able to have an impact in North Beach and Telegraph Hill, including, but not limited to, organizing social events, advocating for pro-community policies, and putting together the quarterly newspaper you are currently reading.

I would also like to say a very big thank you to Joe Luttrell, THD's former Treasurer, who has been teaching me the ins and outs of QuickBooks and THD finances; he has been patient with me while I get up to speed. Under his tenure, THD has been put in a financially strong position, and I hope to continue this trend.

As many of you know, THD's fiscal year runs from April 1 through March 31, so this report looks at the first half of our year. THD aims for a break-even budget for its operations throughout the year and, so far, we have a modest net income of \$2,183.23. THD has a few large expenses approaching, so it's important we maintain financial prudence.



THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU
Get involved in our neighborhood and make a difference!
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STANDING COMMITTEES

Art & Culture: Anna Berryman (Chair) anna.berryman@thd.org
Budget: Joe Luttrell (Chair) joe.luttrell@thd.org
Membership: Al Fontes (Chair) THDmembership@gmail.com
Oral History Project: TBD
Transportation: Howard Wong and Michael Pedroni
howard.wong@thd.org and michael.pedroni@thd.org
Parks & Trees: Don Raichle (Chair) don.raichle@thd.org
Planning & Zoning: Mary Lipian and Stan Hayes (Co-Chairs)
mary.lipian@thd.org and stan.hayes@thd.org
Semaphore: Cap Caplan (Editor) cap.caplan@thd.org
Social & Program: Bob Berryman (Chair) bob.berryman@thd.org
Waterfront: Jon Golinger (Chair) jon.golinger@thd.org
Communications: Al Fontes, Katie Hopkins, Leah Lovelace, Sarah Kliban
al.fontes@thd.org

PLANNING & ZONING COMMITTEE MEETS last Thursdays.
Call for time and location. 986-7070, 563-3494, or 391-5652.

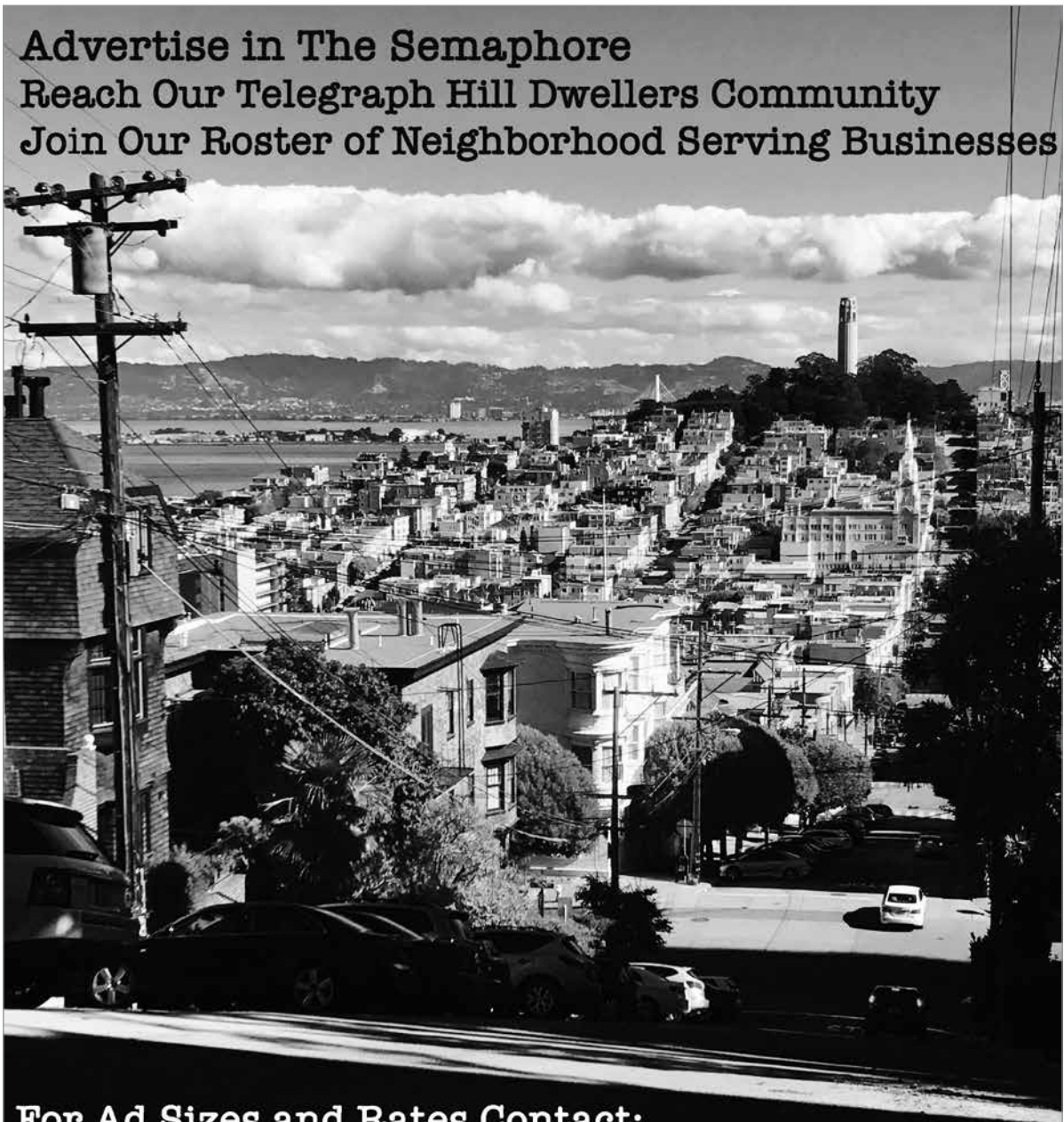
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Friends of Washington Square Liaison: Marilee Gaffney
Neighborhood Network Liaison: Gerry Crowley
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Editor of *The Semaphore*: Cap Caplan — cap.caplan@thd.org

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Term: 2018-2019
Open position
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Sarah Kliban
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THE SEMAPHORE

#223

Fall 2018

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